



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

National Rural Proofing Guidelines

In England 9.5 million people (19% of the population) live in rural areas (settlements of fewer than 10,000 people).

Rural proofing - Why?

- to be sure they **get a fair deal** from all Government policy (*Rural Statement 2012*)
- HM Treasury's **Green Book**
- Impact Assessments** for Departmental policies
- not optional**

Rural proofing - What?

- assessing policy options** & solutions in rural areas
- all stages** of policy development
- assessing **evidence**
- adjusting** policies or delivery
- avoiding unintended consequences**
- about equity**
- not complicated** & not a significant burden
- not special pleading** for rural communities

Diversity of rural areas

- Open countryside** with a scattering of small towns and villages, like Norfolk or Kent
- Sparsely populated upland areas**; such as the Yorkshire Dales or Lake District
- Coastal communities** in places like Cornwall or Northumberland, dependent on fishing or tourism
- Deprived former mining areas** in places like Derbyshire or Durham
- Commuter villages** on the periphery of large towns & cities

For people living and working in rural areas there can be **challenges & barriers** for their **businesses**, the **services** they receive and their **quality of life**.

The Rural Proofing Guidelines help policy makers to minimise these challenges.

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What sort of challenges?

For the rural economy (worth £205bn per year)

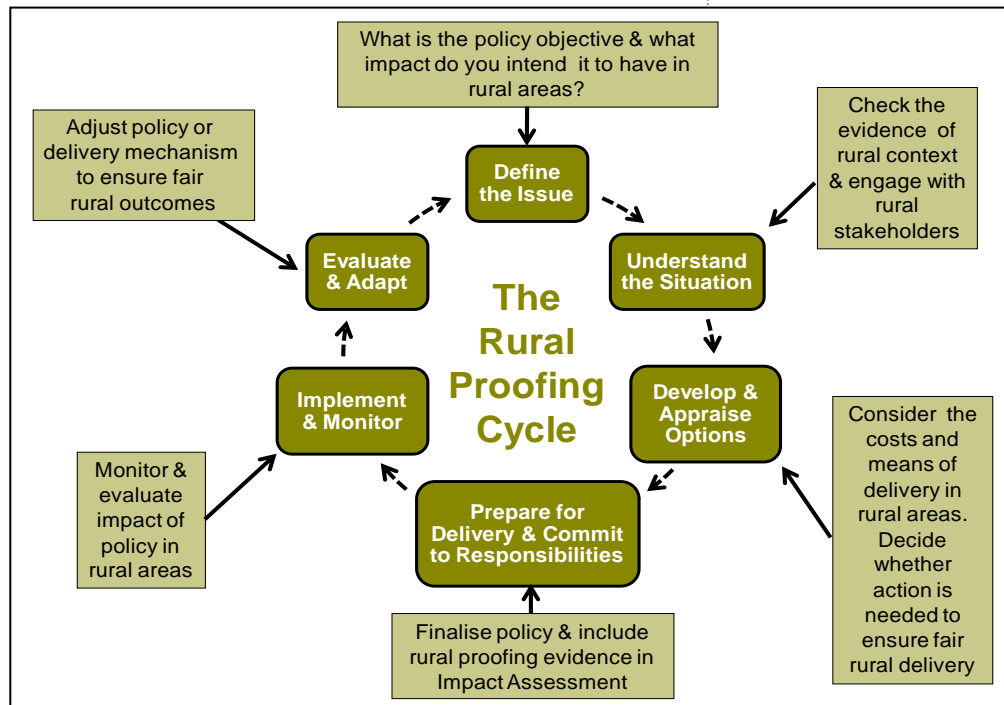
- **Lack of access to markets** due to distance & costs.
- **Lack of fast internet**
- Variable **mobile phone services**
- **Lack of access to business skills** development & training opportunities
- Lack of access to **research & development**
- Lack of access to **finance**

For rural service delivery

- **Public transport can be limited** (only 42% of households in the most rural areas have a regular bus)
- **GP surgeries** (21% of rural households have to go 2.5 miles or more) & **other health services can be several miles away**
- There are disproportionately more older people (the average age is 6 years older than in urban areas), with associated demands on health services
- **Demand for health services is growing**
- Health, waste collection and other **services can be more difficult and costly to provide**

For rural quality of life

- Over 1.3m people live in **poverty** but are spread across small pockets of deprivation which can make them difficult to identify and help
- **Household incomes** can be lower due to part time or seasonal working
- The Job Centre can be many miles away, and lack of public transport makes it **difficult for the unemployed to access new jobs**
- Disproportionately more households are in **fuel poverty**
- Two in five homes are **off the gas grid** and many will depend on more expensive fuel
- **House prices** tend to be higher in rural areas (on average £19,000 more than in urban areas)



1. How to Rural Proof before and during policy development

Define the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the policy objective in terms of problem to be solved or outcome to be achieved?What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?What constitutes fair rural outcomes in this case?
Understand the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the current situation in rural areas?Do you have the necessary evidence about the position in rural areas?Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?
Develop & appraise options	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is action needed to ensure fair rural outcomes?Will it cost more to deliver the policy in rural areas?Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?

2. How to Rural Proof during and after implementation

Prepare for delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?Have these actions been recorded?Have they been adequately reflected in the Impact Assessment?
Implement & monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What action has been taken to monitor rural outcomes?What mechanisms exist for taking further action if problems arise?
Evaluate & adjust where required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have rural impacts been included in the evaluation process?How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?

3. How to Rural Proof: Possible actions to take

- Allow for higher rural unit **delivery costs** in funding formulae or allocations
- Look at **alternative means** of providing and accessing the services in rural areas, e.g. through the use of volunteers or social enterprise
- Encourage **alternative delivery** through the possible use of volunteers or the mutualisation of service delivery
- Reduce the need to travel** by using outreach, mobile services or localised delivery
- Consider better **integration or improvement of transport links**
- Allow local delivery bodies **flexibility to find the best local solution(s)**; avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach
- Use the **rural networks and meeting points** that do exist, for example post offices, village halls, parish notice boards
- Ensure the **needs of smaller businesses** are specifically addressed
- Use small area based data** to identify social, economic and environmental differences that need to be accounted for in the policy
- Engage with rural stakeholders** and their networks so you can gather evidence and test your proposals

Support

- Defra's **Rural Communities Policy Unit** is the centre of rural expertise within Government, and is able to advise policy-makers within Whitehall Departments on the likelihood and possible scale of rural impacts, and to suggest actions that might be taken to mitigate these
- The Unit offers up-to-date information on rural areas and key rural stakeholders. It offers links to other support and information and you can raise any questions about Rural Proofing with your regular RCPU policy contacts. Alternatively, contact: rural.communities@defra.gsi.gov.uk
- A separate research report has been produced on the good practice principles underpinning **Local Level Rural Proofing Work**. This provides useful insights into the issues affecting the local delivery of policy
- The Office of Fair Trading report on **Price and Choice in Remote Communities** (June 2012) also offers a valuable insight in the issues affecting the most remote rural communities

Statistical Support

- For help with rural evidence and statistics, the RCPU economists, statisticians and research experts are available to help
- An important tool is the **Rural/Urban Definition (England and Wales)** which classifies each Census Output Area by:
 - Settlement type:
 - Urban (population is 10,000 or more)
 - Rural town and fringe
 - Rural village
 - Rural hamlets and isolated dwellings
 - Context:
 - Less sparse
 - Sparse

From these building blocks higher level geographies can be classified, including local authorities, and statistics extracted for them

- The **Statistical Digest of Rural England** provides a wide range of useful statistical data on the issues affecting rural England, and examines the differences and similarities between rural and urban areas
- Neighbourhood statistics** enable you to explore a range of social, economic and geographical indicators in different localities
- NOMIS** - is a service provided by the Office for National Statistics to give you free access to the most detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics from official sources
- More spatial data is available from other Government Departments and web-sites

Useful links

- Rural economy:** www.defra.gov.uk/rural/economy/
- Rural statistics:** www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/rural/
- Local rural statistical profiles:** www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/rural/local-areas/

Enquiries: rural.communities@defra.gsi.gov.uk